# *New York*
# Theatre Critics' Reviews
## *1948*

Volume IX, Number 18 • Rachel W. Coffin, *Editor* • Week of October 4, 1948

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*Theatre Openings*

"Edward, My Son"

"Time for Elizabeth"

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NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN — NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS — NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
NEW YORK TIMES — NEW YORK MIRROR
NEW YORK SUN — NEW YORK STAR — NEW YORK POST

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# "Edward, My Son"

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

OCTOBER 1, 1948

= By HOWARD BARNES =

*Thank You Mr. Morley*

WITH "Edward, My Son" the season has finally come up with a play of distinction and inherent theatrical excitement. It is easy to understand why the Robert Morley-Noel Langley saga at the Martin Beck has been a resounding success in London. Although it spans some thirty years of a father's misguided devotion to his son, it knits episodes into a compact and urgent exposition. Immaculately produced by Gilbert Miller and Henry Sherek and performed with sheer brilliance by Morley, Peggy Ashcroft, Ian Hunter and their assistants, it is a work to rekindle one's enthusiasm for stage sorcery. It has import and honesty; sardonic undercurrents and passages of moving beauty. Here is a drama of genuine stature.

The Edward of the title never appears in the course of a prologue and ten scenes. The authors have employed the figure as an off-stage reflector to create engrossing characters and situations. Starting with the lad's first birthday, they have shown how ruthless and tragic an over-weening paternal love may become. In the all-important role of the father Morley misses no twist of his own collaboration. Whether he is burning his store to get money for an operation, thrusting aside old friends, partners and schoolmasters in his lust to make the world an oyster for his boy, humiliating his wife to keep up appearances, or making short shift of a girl whom Edward has seduced, he builds an evil and fascinating tyrant.

* * *

Those who saw the fine actor in "Oscar Wilde" a decade ago will not be surprised that this is so. His sheer size is formidable. His mirthless smile accompanies each savage attempt to endow his son with everything he may desire, even at the risk of spoiling him. Far more important than his explicit acting is the fact that he always makes one conscious that Edward is just around the corner There have been few performances to match this in many a moon. To his great credit, too, may it be added that as co-author he has never set the stage for himself alone. It is the various lives that are distorted by an over-weening love which make "Edward, My Son" deeply satisfying.

* * *

Miss Ashcroft is not far behind him in making the offering true, terrible and insistent. Her mother is a character which really changes with the years, from a happy young matron living in a Brighton flat, to a disillusioned and drunken old lady with a title. The scene in which she is bullied into accepting her husband's indiscretions for the sake of a son she knows is being ruined is grimly absorbing. Her sodden grief when Edward is killed in the first years of the war is infinitely pitiable. Leueen McGrath is lovely and accomplished as the great man's mistress and Ian Hunter is splendid as a doctor who stands by through every atrocity prompted by affection. The other players have fleeting assignments, but they are all first-rate. Peter Ashmore's staging against Raymond Sovey settings captures every quality of the play. "Edward, My Son" is a gift of great price from the English theater.

**'EDWARD, MY SON.'**

Play by Robert Morley and Noel Langley, staged by Peter Ashmore; settings and lighting by Raymond Sovey; presented by Gilbert Miller and Henry Sherek at the Martin Beck Theater, Thursday evening, September 30, 1948.

The cast:

| | |
|---|---|
| Arnold Holt | Robert Morley |
| Evelyn Holt | Peggy Ashcroft |
| Lorry Parker | Ian Hunter |
| Harry Soames | Torin Thatcher |
| Dr. Waxman | Dayton Lumis |
| Cunningham | Waldo Sturrey |
| Ellerby | Godfrey Kenton |
| Hanray | D. A. Clarke-Smith |
| Eileen Perry | Leueen MacGrath |
| Prothero | Richard Newton |
| Burton | Godfrey Kenton |
| Simmers | Waldo Sturrey |
| Phyllis Maxwell | Dorothy Beattie |
| Betty Fowler | Patricia Hicks |

SYNOPSIS: Act. I. Scene 1. Arnold's flat in Brighton, 1919. Scene 2. The same, 1924. Scene 3. The same, a few weeks later. Scene 4. The headmaster's study, Grainsarry School, 1930. Act II. Scene 1. Offices of Arnold Holt & Co., 1934. Scene 2. Eileen Perry's flat, 1935. Scene 3. A hotel room in Alassio, next day. ACT III. Scene 1. Lord Holt's house in Charles Street, London, 1938. Scene 2. The same, 1941. Scene 3. The same, 1948

New York World-Telegram

OCTOBER 1, 1948

# 'Edward, My Son' Portrait of Vanity

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

"Edward, My Son," the new English import, makes an evening of rich and expert theater that seems all too short, despite the luxury of personality and incident with which it is told.

Covering the 30 years from the end of World War I to the present, the play moves tautly at a good clip through the pungent episodes in the panoramic rise of an Englishman's family. It is a thorough character study of a great egotist, told with a canny eye on the entertainment value of pure narrative, and a minimum of moralizing.

In a prologue the play is presented by the leading character, Arnold Holt, as the story of his life, offering no suggestions as to what it is to prove, and no apologies about what it will reveal.

**Start in 1919.**

On his son's first birthday in 1919, Arnold and Evelyn, his wife, are a modest, familiarly insecure young couple, absorbed in their child. Even then, Arnold insists he will be rich and famous for the sake of his boy, and through the years, as his implacable ambition makes him a tycoon of many facets, he consistently claims as a motive the interests of his wife and child.

Even in his youth, when he burns the stock of his bankrupt business for insurance, there is no evidence that he understands dishonesty or risk. In that instance he needs money for an operation on the boy, but his success decrees a lasting moral decadence.

He buys a school when his jaded youngster is about to be expelled. A former partner, whom he sent to prison for crimes less than his, gets only an insulting gesture of help, and kills himself. When his wife tries to divorce him in a desperate effort to straighten out their son, Arnold threatens to ruin their oldest friend, who loves her.

**Vanity to End.**

Edward's death at the start of the war is little more than tribute to his monstrous vanity. He considers an officer's empty designation of the boy as a hero the ultimate approval of his handiwork. In the end, he is prepared to glut his desire for power by stimulating the same decay in his grandson.

This is not a pleasant story, but neither is it depressing, for several clear reasons. The play offers a striking estimate of material values in its pitiless revelation of a man who believes he can buy everything. The key situations, which are invariably familiar, are treated with refreshing approach and are always excellent and disturbing theater. Finally Robert Morley plays the central figure for all its essential rigidity, but with the great charm and humor without which the man could never have achieved his lifelong hoax.

Morley sets a tone of acting which is amiable more than naturalistic. Not above exaggeration, he and most of the cast tell their story to the audience, not just to each other. Morley makes one admire Holt's resourcefulness, even while the man's amoral determination grows more terrifying.

**Peggy Ashcroft Superb.**

Peggy Ashcroft offers a blue ribbon performance as Holt's wife. First eager, uncertain and wary, she grows into elegant, defensive middle age, and ends in defeat as a slovenly dipsomaniac. Last night she was tendered ovations at each of her last two exits. Disturbing as they were to the play, they were entirely deserved, as were the shouts that greeted her curtain call appearance.

Ian Hunter is sturdy and forceful as the doctor friend who is as helpless as he is aware of the desecration in Holt's wake. As the mistress of the central figure, Leueen MacGrath produces a remarkable effect of warmth glowing through a cool surface. She has beauty, grace and range as an actress.

A striking talent of these actors is the variety of effect they achieve vocally. Wide tonal scope constantly permits them to embroider their impersonations with pregnant detail without any visual distractions.

If Mr. Morley is inclined to go on with the history of the invisible Edward's father, we would be most interested to follow him to Palm Beach, with or without his grandson.

## New York Post

**OCTOBER 1, 1948**

### The Season Really Starts With 'Edward, My Son'

**By RICHARD WATTS JR.**

There are a number of things that might be said against "Edward, My Son" as a play, but there can be little save praise for it as shrewdly effective theatrical entertainment. With the brilliant Robert Morley giving a fascinating performance in the episodic drama which he wrote with Noel Langley, with Peggy Ashcroft at the height of her skill as an actress, and with a production which shows the English commercial stage at its gulleful best, this importation from London at the Martin Beck provides such an impressive evening of frank and unashamed theatre that the season can at last be said to have started.

"Edward, My Son" is more of a triumph for Mr. Morley, the actor, than for Mr. Morley, the dramatist, but it also reveals that he and Mr. Langley have a decided skill for writing fine acting parts and arresting individual scenes. As a ruthless industrial magnate and newspaper publisher, who is willing to go to any lengths to get his own way and to make life easier for his worthless son, the superb actor whom we last saw in these parts as an unforgettable Oscar Wilde gives a stunning characterization, sinister, witty and immensely artful, always suggesting the power and charm as well as the evil of the man.

**Peggy Ashcroft**

It is the most arresting role in the play, as well as the most brilliantly acted, but it is by no means the only interesting one or the only one that is beautifully played. As the publisher's trapped and hopeless wife, who slowly declines into alcoholic senility, Miss Ashcroft provides a moving and completely believable portrait of physical and spiritual disintegration. As she moves from youth to old age, she never falls back on the easy device of relying on grotesque makeup. She ages in body and spirit, in voice and posture and movement. It is a splendid acting achievement.

All of the minor roles are played with that attention to detail and credibility that English actors, at their best, manage so delightfully. In particular, Leueen MacGrath as the publisher's secretary and mistress, Torin Thatcher as a luckless jailbird, D. A. Clarke-Smith as a bullied headmaster, and Patricia Hicks as the son's jilted sweetheart are not very far from perfection in their brief appearances. In a role second only in importance to those of Mr. Morley and Miss Ashcroft, Ian Hunter achieves the pleasant feat of making a lung-suffering doctor, who is the play's conscience engaging rather than stuffy.

**The Son**

As for Edward, the nasty and worthless son upon whom the father dotes, he is one of those characters, so popular among playwrights, who never appear and are only discussed by the others, and he is one of the most successful of them. This horrible example of paternal overindulgence comes to such realistic life as he impinges upon the lives of everyone in the cast that it is never difficult to believe that he is hovering about, in his drunken, thieving, lecherous fashion. On his behalf, though, I must say that the play makes it clear that if he hadn't started his father on his career of successful skullduggery, something else would have served the domineering Lord Holt as an excuse.

"Edward, My Son" is not a distinguished or creatively impressive drama. It is frankly a piece of shrewd theatrical trade goods that has been smartly fabricated, rather than written with integrity and imaginative power. The point is that it does achieve its effects. As a portrait of a ruthless, mericless titan of business and a chronicle of the rise and fall of his personal empire in the England between two wars, it is almost continuously absorbing. And Mr. Morley is certainly one of the most fascinating actors in the modern theatre, a player of unforgettable individuality, style and power.

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## Journal American

**OCTOBER 1, 1948**

### An Excellently Acted Professional Play

**By ROBERT GARLAND**

They, meaning the show-people, have given the theatre back to the professionals. Last night, at the Martin Beck, the happy event took place when Gilbert Miller and Henry Sherek presented "Edward, My Son," the Robert Morley-Noel Langley play, which, since May, 1947, has been luring the better part of London into His Majesty's.

Along with "Edward, My Son" and its six original West End settings, "supervised" for the American trade by the obliging Raymond Sovey, Mr. Miller and Mr. Sherek have imported an equal number of the 13 members of the original West End cast.

Of these, Mr. Morley, co-author of the play, and Peggy Ashcroft, are starred, as is Ian Hunter, pinchhitting for John Robinson.

**Each, plus Leueen MacGrath, pronounced "Leween McGra," in case you care to practice, act as professionally as can be under Peter Ashmore's original West End direction.**

**And, with the preceding season-openers in mind, that is right smart professional. Mr. Morley, unselfishly has written roles in which not only he can shine. He has also provided cushey parts for his fellow-players . . .**

Especially for Peggy Ashcroft as Evelyn Holt, mother of the Edward of the title; Ian Hunter as Larry Parker, more-than-doctor in the Arnold Holt menage, and Torin Thatcher, who, as Harry Soames, gives as rare an impersonation as is to be found on Broadway.

* * *

### Rather Awkward

All of which is sheer hedging on your reporter's part before admitting that, taken as it comes from the huzzas in the Haymarket, "Edward, My Son" is somewhat awkward as a play.

Last night, as it moved from scene to scene, from situation to situation, from year to year on West 45th Street, it was more interesting as a vehicle than as a coordinated drama.

The story of the Arnold Holt of Brighton, 1919, who becomes the Lord Holt of Charles Street, 1948; of his wife, who descends from commoner to lady, of the physician who is her lover and of the secretary who is his lordship's counterpart, moves jumpily through almost two decades without the Edward, who is the wormy apple of his father's jaundiced eye actually appearing on the scene.

**He, like the play of which he is the Harvey-like motivation, is always on the verge of coming miraculously to life. As an entirety, I mean! For scattered episodes are frequently very much alive. Especially in the final stanza when, in Lord Holt's handsome house in Charles Street, Lady Holt, drunk and disillusioned, takes "Edward, My Son" into her superb Peggy-Ashcroft-ian hands.**

Then, the English importation becomes a play rather than a series of sketches about a nasty little Englishman who is not exactly there. Up to then it has been good, even better than good, in spots. Miss Ashcroft, staggering up the stairs, lifts it into drama.

* * *

### Morley Surprises

If you have read "Edward, My Son," as I have, you will be surprised, as I was, at the deceivingly light touch of Robert Morley's performance as the lordly father of a far-from-lordly son.

But, as co-creator of Arnold-into-Lord Holt, Mr. Morley should know what he is doing. At any rate, the author-actor's impersonation is proudly professional, that of a skillful showman.

But it is the Evelyn-into-Lady Holt of Miss Ashcroft which gives me, as onlooker, the greatest satisfaction. Last seen on Broadway in Maxwell Anderson's "High Tor," the English actress has matured amazingly in her chosen art of mummery. Ian Hunter, as Lady Holt's affectionate physician, is, indeed an asset, no matter how excellent John Robinson may have been.

**The same can, and should, be said for the Harry Soames of Torin Thatcher, a difficult role assumed in England by Richard Caldicot. And Eileen Perry, as impersonated by Leueen MacGrath—pronounced Leween McGra, remember?—moves like a dancer.**

**Even when at a standstill, she is agreeable to the trans-Atlantic eye. The others range from good to better, from better to better-than-that, really . . .**

"Edward, My Son" marks the true beginning of the new season of 1948-1949. It is, as I have said, professional; it is theatre for the theatre's sake, an ever-so-English vehicle in which an actor can act, and an actress, if she is Peggy Ashcroft, can out-act him!

The Sun

OCTOBER 1, 1948

By WARD MOREHOUSE

***Here It Is—the First Hit!***

Broadway's new season, shockingly inept since Labor Day, took on vitality last night as the imported "Edward, My Son," an episodic play jammed with good theater, was given its first performance at the Martin Beck. Robert Morley, the expert and artful actor who delighted us all nine years ago in "Oscar Wilde," returns in a fascinating performance as a scoundrel.

Morley returns as the co-author of "Edward, My Son"—his collaborator is Noel Langley—and as the principal player in the company installed at the Beck by Gilbert Miller and Henry Sherek, showman from London. Morley is more spectacular as an actor than he is as a dramatist. His play has a way of sagging and lagging and dragging when he is not upon the stage. But when it does show a tendency to run down he steps in beguilingly to bolster it. He is enormously engaging in his confidential, before-the-curtain talks in which he tells you about the monster he is playing.

Morley makes the character of Arnold Holt a bland, jaunty crafty and unscrupulous man of millions, a magnate motivated in his foul doings by a fanatical, and frequently unaccountable, devotion to his son, who remains invisible all evening. But Edward is always in the dialogue and in the play, which covers a period of twenty-nine years.

It's for Edward, the unseen little rotter, that Holt resorts to arson, blackmail and other forms of knavery. When Holt is young and struggling and reasonably honest and living in a dreary flat in Brighton he sets fire to his business to get the insurance money to pay for an expensive operation for the boy. He later threatens to buy a boys' school and destroy it to prevent Edward's expulsion as an incorrigible. Still later, he gives up his pretty secretary-mistress to protect Edward's name and he buys off a shop girl Edward has seduced. Finally, Edward's short and tragic life is ended as a flyer during the London blitz. To the still indulgent Holt, the boy went to his death as a hero and a leader of men.

There is some excellent acting in Morley's company. He has people who can play scenes with him. Peggy Ashcroft, in the role she created in London, distinguishes herself, bringing poignance to the character of Holt's wife, whose life becomes one of bitterness and pitiful drunkenness. There is a brilliant performance from Leueen MacGrath, making her New York debut, as the secretary-mistress. Miss MacGrath exhibits sureness, poise, good looks and complete finesse.

Ian Hunter is first-rate as the family doctor; so is Torin Thatcher as a jailbird and Holt's partner from the early days. D. A. Clarke-Smith is effective as the bewildered and harassed headmaster. There is first-rate work from Patricia Hicks, Richard Newton and Dorothy Beattie, not from London but from our own Carolinas.

The new season now has, in "Edward, My Son," its first solid hit. "Edward" has its imperfections as a play, but it provides full-measure theater. And Robert Morley contributes a performance that is extraordinary in its variety and fascinating in its every detail. It's great to have him back.

---

DAILY NEWS

OCTOBER 1, 1948

# 'Edward, My Son' Is a Beautifully Staged, Splendidly Acted Drama

By JOHN CHAPMAN

There are moments, or hours, or maybe a day once in a rare while when nothing can go wrong; everything clicks. Everybody is happy and life is fine, and the moments or the hours or the day become something special in one's memory. Such a time was last evening, when Gilbert Miller and Henry Sherek presented "Edward, My Son" at the Martin Beck Theatre.

Robert Morley began it by coming out in front of the curtain to introduce himself and say that here is what happened to him. He ended the evening by appearing before the curtain again asking what anybody else would have done. Between these two little solo speeches was some magical theatre. It was one of those evenings when I knew, before Mr. Morley had spoken twenty words, that nothing could go wrong and that everything would click.

"Edward, My Son" is by Mr. Morley and Noel Langley. Mr. Morley is a pudgy Englishman whom we New Yorkers met only once before, when he played the title role in "Oscar Wilde" ten years ago and fascinated us. Mr. Langley is a South African whose plays have eluded Broadway, but whose screenwriting was used briefly in Hollywood a few years back. Their "Edward, My Son" has been a London hit for more than a year.

**The Parental Urge.**

It is a play about a seemingly normal and decent lower middle-class father who will do anything—as will any normal and decent parent—for his child. Only Edward's father is something special; he possesses immense amounts of force and guile.

When Edward is an infant he develops an ailment which will make him a cripple, except for an outside chance that a very expensive operation by a Swiss specialist may cure him. So Edward's father takes this outside chance, very calmly. To get insurance money he arranges for a fire at the little business establishment he and an associate are operating.

This is the beginning of the success of Edward's father and of the moral disintegration of Edward's mother. The father rides down all obstacles, becoming a tycoon, a publisher and a Lord. He uses people and discards them. When Edward is to be expelled from school for being a natural-born louse, his father buys the school and says suavely to the headmaster, "At the risk of sounding old-fashioned, I own the mortgages."

Edward, who never appears in the play, continues being a louse until he is killed in World War II. Well, says Mr. Morley at the end, that was the way it was; he loved his son and he would do anything for him.

**An Actors' Play.**

Most plays lately have been, primarily, playwrights' plays. "Edward, My Son" is an actors' play, and it is thrillingly acted. Mr. Morley, as the father, is superb in the finely detailed finish and quick humor of his performance. As the mother, Peggy Ashcroft had first-nighters applauding every exit. Here, indeed, is a role to delight a competent actress, beginning in a mousy, homey fashion and ending in a great state of drunkenness and dissillusionment. To put it simply, Miss Ashcroft is just marvelous.

And so it goes all the way through a play which is admirably cast, beautifully mounted and intelligently directed. Ian Hunter is very good in the most obvious of the roles—a family doctor who is in on everybody's trials and ailments. Leueen MacGrath gives a sensitive and attractive account of a mistress who is, in time, discarded. D. A. Clarke-Smith has a fine scene as the headmaster who learns that his school has been bought away from him, and Dorothy Beattie and Patricia Hicks are two attractive young women in Edward's no-good life.

The director is Peter Ashmore. The settings are by Raymond Sovey. The play is a must for playgoers.

**The New York Times**

OCTOBER 1, 1948

## AT THE THEATRE

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Thanks to Robert Morley, the theatre has been restored to professionalism, and the September jinx has been broken. "Edward, My Son," which was put on at the Martin Beck last evening, is no shakes as a work of literary art. It is an actor's play, put together by Mr. Morley and Noel Langley for purposes of performance. But since Mr. Morley and Peggy Ashcroft are superb players, the purpose is admirably served in this instance, and "Edward, My Son" brings us a fascinating and expert evening of acting, and the theatre once more looks like something worth respecting.

Probably it should be described as a morality play. For Mr. Morley and Mr. Langley are tracing the sublimely corrupt career of a London newspaper proprietor who is inspired by fanatical devotion to a worthless son. Early in the play Arnold Holt commits arson to get money enough to buy an expensive surgical operation for his son. Arnold's first crime succeeds.

With his foot on the first rung of the ladder, he keeps on stepping higher from one grand swindle to another, getting richer and richer, and indulging his unsavory brat more and more shamelessly. In the end, Arnold turns out to be a monstrous power in the land; perched grandly on a towering heap of abominations. Edward, the son, never appears on the stage. According to one of his schoolmasters, he is a stinker. It is just as well that we never see him.

• • •

It is a finger-tips play contrived of many stage scenes and compounded of stock theatrical ideas. Both Mr. Morley and Mr. Langley think like actors. In their writing they give you the surfaces of characters. What the play lacks in depth and substance Mr. Morley supplies out of the magnificences of his acting. He is an actor in the grand manner—imposing and deliberate, with a broad sweep to his style of expression. But on the big surfaces he can give you some exquisitely neat details. For he is also witty and droll, a master of satiric inflections. And there is something warm and informal about his grandiloquence. Without the constant glitter of intelligence, this style of acting might be intolerable. But with the discipline of intelligence it is downright superb.

• • •

Miss Ashcroft is triumphant, too. She plays the part of Arnold Holt's wife. In the pattern of the play she is a young, romantic mother in the early scenes; but as her husband moves up she goes down through middle-aged bitterness into drunkenness and cynicism in the end. That, too, is an actor's part. Miss Ashcroft is the sort of actress who can play it with power as well as discretion. She has strength for the middle scenes and the inverted pride for the big scenes of pathos and disintegration.

All the way through, the acting has tang and lucidity. Ian Hunter as the loyal, forbearing friend of the family, Leueen MacGrath as a secretary and mistress with charm and decision, Torin Thatcher as an affable but unlucky rogue, D. A. Clarke-Smith as a sanctimonious headmaster and Patricia Hicks as an unhappy shopgirl—all give well-defined and mettlesome performances.

• • •

Under Peter Ashmore's direction, the performance has a spontaneous briskness. And Raymond Sovey has attended to the lighting of sets which presumably come from the London engagement. The candid theatricalism of the drama gives "Edward, My Son" a hackneyed look that is disenchanting. But Mr. Morley and his associates can be trusted with theatricalism. They are masters of the craft and they fill their performance with gleam, wit and delight.

---

***NEW YORK* STAR**

October 3, 1948

# *A Good Player Gets in the Game*

*By* John Lardner

It's an axiom of poker science that the value of a hand like two pairs increases with the player's distance from the dealer. In the first round of the new theater season, in the gruesome month of September that has just ended, it turns out that Robert Morley, a gifted actor and part-time playwright from England, was sitting in the right spot. He played last.

Hand after hand was thrown in or checked like a pair of deuces before the bet reached Mr. Morley. He didn't need to have much. What he had was a play called *Edward, My Son*, the equivalent, in coarse card-table terms, of kings or aces up. Against the hands that had gone before him, it was as good as a flush. So strongly did he play it, in fact, that most of the eyewitnesses at the Martin Beck last Thursday night thought it was a flush. That is a tribute in part to Mr. Morley's showmanship and in part, as I said before, to the fact that sitting where he did in the game, the pot was in the bag for him.

• • •

Myself, in spite of a case of jaundice acquired at *Grandma's Diary* and compounded by *Town House* and *Time for Elizabeth*, I do not resent the success of this London slicker, who reminds me strongly of an operator on the trans-Atlantic boats called English Bob. It's nice to have a good player in the game again.

On intrinsic merit, as we critics say when we run out of plain words, *Edward, My Son* is a two-pair play. Its story is artificial, and its air of significance is studied and put together with a thin grade of library paste. But it is pretty fine theater, just the same. It is glossy and bright and full of entertaining lines. History shows that, for better or worse, good "theater" does not have to have solid substance behind it—that there is such a thing as skill, sometimes a very high degree of skill, in the manufacture of surface entertainment.

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You are asked by Mr. Morley and Noel Langley, the authors of *Edward, My Son*, to consider the case of a small business man who devotes himself, from the time his only son is born, to advancing the latter's interests, or what he thinks are his interests, in the world. The father (Mr. Morley) sacrifices his friends, his ethics, and his marriage to this end. His fanaticism brings out in him, rather strangely and abruptly, a ruthless genius for acquiring wealth and power. He becomes a tycoon and a peer. He drives his wife to drink. His son, or so the authors would have you believe—they never show the boy on the stage, which is both a good trick and a wise one—goes to hell in a bucket, though making the last step of the great transition in a Spitfire, in 1939, at the age of twenty.

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*Edward, My Son* has had a long run in London. It has been made into a motion picture with plush trimmings, including Spencer Tracy and Deborah Kerr. It won for Mr. Morley and his leading lady, Peggy Ashcroft, the Ellen Terry awards for the best performance of the 1947 season in London. It came into the Martin Beck this week breathing success through both nostrils. Local resistance being low, it seems to have extended its winning streak without trouble. It is cloddish of me, I expect, to find flaws in this graceful and polished and high-riding piece, but I did think there were a couple.

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The character of Arnold Holt—Mr. Morley's part—is a little puzzling. His origins and education, the story suggests, were pedestrian and sketchy, yet the man talks in a rich, rolling prose, full of style, wit, and even erudition (a gag is planted in the first act to show his lack of culture, but it doesn't match up). I can hardly blame Mr. Morley for making the most of the brilliant lines he has given himself, with Mr. Langley's help. Still, this Holt is not the fellow to be speaking them.

• • •

As for Edward, the unseen problem child, a good part of the play's force depends on making him seem depraved and sinister, the frightening fruit of his father's pride and folly. Yet the evidence does not show that he was anything worse than a pretty average sort of rich rounder. He was a trifle light-fingered as a boy. He learned some dirty words in school. He drank early and often, and sometimes failed to keep the stuff down, which is a fault shared by farmers, publishers, cops, and artists of high respectability. He once got a girl in trouble and then declined to marry her, which is a fault shared by—well, why go on? You'd think the kid had two heads, to hear them talk.

• • •

I wish that Edward and his father were a little more convincing. I wish that the text were a little less wordy, and, just here and there, less banal, as in the matter of the family doctor who hangs around being loving and helpful and moral. I also wish, though, that more shows were as entertaining as this one.

• • •

*Edward, My Son* is mostly Mr. Morley's triumph, but the acting and directing are excellent throughout. A particularly pleasant job is turned in by Leueen MacGrath, as the secretary and mistress of Lord Holt. Miss MacGrath's program biographer says the first name is pronounced Leween, and the second MacGra, which tips I pass along to the vast public which will be seeing her in the picture version next year.

**Daily Mirror**

OCTOBER 1, 1948

## 'Edward, My Son' Is Solid Dramatic Success

By ROBERT COLEMAN

Gilbert Miller and Henry Sherek have a great hit on their hands this morning, titled "Edward, My Son." It should run at the Martin Beck Theatre as long as star Robert Morley and his wonderful associates care to play it. It is both a novelty and a pleasure for your drama reporter to be able to toss his hat in the air again for a worthy success.

"Edward, My Son" has to do with an efficient and ruthless Englishman who sacrifices marital happiness, weaker partners and his own integrity to amass a fortune and gain enormous power for a playboy son incapable of using either wisely. The son is killed in the war where he served his country better than he did his inheritance.

Before his exit from this world, son Edward also had fathered a boy. Doting grandfather attempts to spoil him, but is brooked by a strong-willed mother and a determined family physician.

In penning "Edward, My Son," collaborators Morley and Noel Langley have given us a tremendously effective stage piece. In it, actor-author Morley gives a magnificent performance as the shrewd, remorseless business tycoon, and the affectionate, ever-indulgent parent. It is a fitting companion piece to his Oscar Wilde, in the play of that name, which thrilled New Yorkers during the 1938-39 season.

Peggy Ashcroft is superb as Edward's mother, driven to drink and disintegration by the insensitive brutality of her husband and the waywardness of her son. Her performance frequently drew waves of spontaneous applause from a spellbound first-night audience. It is easy to understand now why Morley and Miss Ashcroft were voted the Ellen Terry awards for "best performances by an actor and an actress" in London during the 1947 season.

Incidentally, neither Edward nor his young son ever appears on stage, though they are made very real to the audience by adroit writing and acting.

Ian Hunter is excellent as the family doctor and there are admirable performances by Torin Thatcher, Leueen MacGrath, Dayton Lummis, D. A. Clarke-Smith, Dorothy Beattie and Patricia Hicks.

Also meriting a salute is the intelligent direction by Peter Ashmore.

New Yorkers have been clamoring for a solid dramatic hit for the past month, and now they have one in "Edward, My Son." It should make the Martin Beck box office the busiest spot along the Rialto for months to come. It is emotional dynamite, exploded with stunning effect by Morley, Miss Ashcroft and their histrionic colleagues. **Walter Winchell, our neighbor on the aisle last evening, embraced the new arrival with the comment: "4 orchids!" Which is tops.**

# "Time for Elizabeth"

New York World-Telegram

SEPTEMBER 28, 1948

## 'Time for Elizabeth' Suffers From Anemia

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

It is highly pleasant to spend an evening with nice normal people like the ones in "Time for Elizabeth." They get along fine with each other and behave like human beings.

Unfortunately their saga is so very underwritten that the actors are hard put to it to spin an evening's entertainment from the play. The very simplicity and naturalness of the atmosphere prohibit any obvious theatricality, and Katherine Alexander and Otto Kruger do splendidly at weaving a fabric of pretty thin threads.

It is the taxes which barely let him break even that put the idea of retirement into Ed Davis' head. The example of an older man in the firm quitting work to go to Elizabeth, N. J., and the boss's insufferable rudeness cinch the idea, so he takes his wife to Florida.

Before long they are both bored to death. Their neighbors irritate them, and stretching the budget loses its entertainment value. With his son-in-law, Ed finally buys a local agency of his old employer, but through a fluke the boss discovers he has it, and puts him out of business.

His daughter is going to have a baby, and he has lost on the stock market. Even the minor jobs Ed tries for fall through, and things look black indeed. In the end he is saved by a logical enough break, and goes back to his old job, more secure than ever. He concludes that his working regime, and the grander manner of living were not so bad after all.

Anyone expecting from authors Norman Krasna and Groucho Marx a hard-hitting hilarious merry-go-round should calm down. What they have written is a peaceful mature play with pleasant comic touches and a sensible moral about people's own back yards.

The most amusing sequence comes in the second act when Mrs. Davis invites the neighbors in for bridge only to learn they expect to be taught how to play the game. In a sense this scene is typical of the play in that it thins out on a low note, just as such a situation most probably would in real life.

The blood of the play comes from the expert acting of the players. Mr. Kruger is completely right as Ed, as typical as they come and likeable at his most irascible. He has the gift of staying in the picture even when scenes are staged at a tentative pace.

Miss Alexander should be ashamed of herself for not turning up oftener on the local boards. She has great personal quality and a technique so polished that it always seems spontaneous. She does not just learn a part in a play and act it; she moves in and lives there. She is always unobtrusively enriching a scene whether she is speaking or not, and she is a rare craftsman at giving other actors a three dimensional support.

Several smaller parts are well done, with the star's pretty daughter, Ottilie Kruger, assuming her actual relation to her father. Russell Hicks is the bombastic boss, and Harlan Briggs makes the most of an undauntable landlord. Leonard Mudie has a nice scene as a retiring Scotsman, and Edward Clark and Theresa Lyon are perfectly cast as neighbors.

There is not a lot of excitement about "Time for Elizabeth," nor is it possible to praise it in any glowing terms. On the other hand there is nothing particularly bad about it except that it might have been better theater.

Perhaps it prejudices one in its favor just because it is about natural people doing natural things.

**'TIME FOR ELIZABETH.'**

Comedy by Norman Krasna and Groucho Marx; settings by George Jenkins; staged by Norman Krasna; presented by Russell Lewis and Howard Young at the Fulton Theater Monday evening, September 27, 1948. The cast:

| | |
|---|---|
| Mr. Robinson | Kenneth Paterson |
| Walter P. Schaeffer | Russell Hicks |
| Miss Greene | Eleanor Lawson |
| Ed Davis | Otto Kruger |
| Harrison Oglethorpe | John Arthur |
| Lily Schaeffer | Leila Bliss |
| Mr. McPherson | Leonard Mudie |
| Kay Davis | Katherine Alexander |
| Anne Davis | Ottilie Kruger |
| Richard Cobern | Dick Hogan |
| Mr. Jasper | Harlan Briggs |
| George Zwilling | Edward Clark |
| Amy Zwilling | Theresa Lyon |
| Vivian Morgan | Sheila Bromley |

SYNOPSIS: Act I. Office of Ed Davis, vice-president and general manager of the Beardrith Washing Machine Company. Early December, 4 p. m. Act II. Scene 1. The living room of an apartment in the Oceanview Arms, Florida. Two weeks later. Scene 2. The same. Six weeks later. Act III. Scene 1. The same. Four days later. Scene 2. The same. Three months later.

## New York Post

SEPTEMBER 28, 1948

### 'Time for Elizabeth' A Very Mild Comedy

By RICHARD WATTS JR.

There might have been more fun in "Time for Elizabeth," at the Fulton last night, if Groucho Marx had played in it, instead of being merely its co-author. That is not to speak slightingly of Otto Kruger, who acts the leading role of a tired and rebellious business man with considerable ingratiating charm. The fact remains, though, that the new comedy is such a meek and uneventful little offering that the maniacal frenzy of a couple of Marx Brothers darting through its placid narrative is needed to save it from lassitude.

The other author of "Time for Elizabeth" is Norman Krasna, who has had vast success with "Dear Ruth" and "John Loves Mary." Mr. Krasna is noted for the mechanical dexterity of his comedies, rather than for any exceptional quality of thought or emotion to be found in them. The trouble with his current effort is that it lacks even the mechanical dexterity, and that Mr. Krasna, the director, is unable to supply the missing artfulness for Mr. Krasna, the playwright. The result is the stage equivalent of a cinema B-comedy.

**Off for Florida**

There isn't even a surprise in it. As soon as you are introduced to the case of Ed Davis, the kindly and much-put-upon General Manager of the Snowdrift Washing Machine Company, see him bullied by the violent head of the firm and watch him plan to get away from it all and settle down in Florida, you know what is going to happen. You know that the first raptures of leisure will soon wear off, that he will long to get back on the job and that, in the end, the boss will beg him to return at even better than the old salary. That's just the way it happens.

Since there is neither freshness in the story nor surprise in the way in which it is carried through to its expected conclusion, there should at least be some enlivening comedy. There are a few amusing lines, some of which have the good fortune to sound as if Groucho Marx had written them, but, on the whole, the going is quiet. The best thing that can be said is that there is a pleasantly unpretentious air about the narrative, but it isn't enough to make for a satisfactory evening.

It may be worth reporting that the title has nothing to do with a woman named Elizabeth. It is the town of that name in New Jersey which is referred to, and that happens only incidentally. One of the characters talks about passing through Elizabeth, N. J., and thinking that there comes a time in the life of every man when he should retire from his hectic business activity and give some thought to a town like Elizabeth. Then the hero revolts and goes off to a place in Florida. I hope you are glad that I have made it all clear.

There is also a moment in which the play seems to insist that the idea of living among people who don't play bridge is enough to drive any man back to his washing machine business. Anyway, Mr. Kruger does what he can with the leading role, and Katherine Alexander is, as usual, intelligent and attractive as his devoted wife. The others, whether juveniles, business men or quaint Florida types, strive earnestly, but they cannot make the new California importation a happy contribution to the season.

## The New York Times

SEPTEMBER 28, 1948

### Otto Kruger Appears in a New Comedy by Norman Krasna and Groucho Marx

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Norman Krasna and Groucho Marx speak disrespectfully of the institution of retiring from business in "Time for Elizabeth," which was acted at the Fulton last evening. Fortunately, their comedy is not very persuasive. Mr. Marx wrote it several years ago at the time when he was retiring from the leer, lunge and grease-paint mustachio of his low comedy masquerade, thus depriving America of one of her greatest inventions.

Since the original comedy lacked the finesse of drawing-room entertainment, Norman Krasna, author of "Dear Ruth" and "John Loves Mary," has brought culture to it. But "Time for Elizabeth" is still a childish charade—amiable in spirit and well-acted by a singularly pleasant cast, but strictly a perambulator frolic. Now Mr. Marx has everyone's permission to throw down his pen and put back the mustachio any time he pleases.

* * *

The lyric title refers to a philosophical Scotsman who retires from New York to Elizabeth, N. J. Inasmuch as Mr. Krasna and Mr. Marx drop that theme as soon as they have stated it, Saroyan can still mull over it for a poetic play. For the authors of "Time for Elizabeth" want to turn out a factory-made job about the general manager of a big business who impulsively quits and returns to Florida to get a little sand in his shoes. He is quickly bored. He cannot stand the people. He loses most of his money. He itches to get back to work. Retiring from business is phonus-balonus, our romping authors seem to say.

Anyone who says that had better smile, stranger. To tell the truth, Mr. Krasna and Mr. Marx smile without exactly guffawing. At heart, "Time for Elizabeth" is a one-act burlesque skit. In three acts with educated players, it is out of its class. For the authors have put it together by piling one joke on top of another and industriously working up clever punch lines for the curtains, like the sketch writers for a theatre of long ago.

They could hardly have assembled a more ingratiating cast. Otto Kruger, as the impenitent general manager, is a remarkably winning actor with a wonderfully neat and resourceful style of expression; and Katherine Alexander, who plays the wife, has a candor and versatility that are equally admirable. The cast also includes Leonard Mudie as a simple Scotsman who can idealize a commonplace thought with the greatest of ease, and Harlan Briggs, whose homespun good humor is as honest as a Currier and Ives print.

The authors have had the good taste to hire Ottilie Kruger to play the part of Otto Kruger's daughter, which she can do with practically no trouble. Dick Hogan is wholesome enough to be an acceptable son-in-law in a sound tradition of gentility. Russell Hicks and Leila Bliss represent predatory capitalism noisily, showing some deviation from the true Republican party line.

Mr. Krasna has directed expertly. George Jenkins has designed twothorougnly documented settings for a routine comedy. But "Time for Elizabeth" is a strangely callow jest to emanate from two of the theatre's maturest workers.

## Daily Mirror

SEPTEMBER 28, 1948

### *'Time for Elizabeth' Just Misses Out*

By ROBERT COLEMAN

Norman Krasna and Groucho Marx started out with an excellent idea for a human little comedy, and then failed to embellish the idea with the warm and genuine touches that could have turned it into a click. As it stands, "Time for Elizabeth," which Russell Lewis and Howard Young brought to the Fulton Theatre last evening, is but a promising synopsis for a good script.

The idea is good because it has verity. Breathes there a man who hasn't day-dreamed of retiring from his business or profession to do some of the things that he has never had time for, things that seem vastly more important than his workaday job, while he still has sufficient health and youth left to relish doing them.

Ed Davis, general manager of the Snowdrift Washing Machine Company, was superbly normal in that he day-dreamed, and was originally abnormal in that he actually sought to realize his dreams by telling off the president of his company, taking a flat in Miami, fishing, playing golf and going broke.

He got the idea from old Mr. McPherson, a machinist at the plant, who decided it was time to retire to Elizabeth, N. J. after almost 25 years of tightening bolts on Snowdrift Washing Machines.

When Davis's dream world collapsed around his ears, he couldn't help wondering how matters were faring with McPherson, but he, like the audience, never found out. However, he did get his job back with an increase in pay and

a block of Snowdrift stock in the best stock-company tradition.

"Time for Elizabeth" fairly cries for the ministrations of a master of the comedy of recognition and honest humanity, like the late Frank Craven. There was a genius at providing the right, the seemingly true, the glowing details to a script that made us think that we were seeing ourselves on stage. It is regretable that Krasna and Marx couldn't command the Craven touch for an essentially Craven subject.

Under Krasna's direction, Otto Kruger, Katherine Alexander, Russell Hicks, Leonard Mudie, Harlan Briggs, John Arthur, Sheila Bromley, Edward Clark Theresa Lyon and others labor valiantly to overcome the weaknesses in their roles.

"Time for Elizabeth" in sum has hilarious and appealing moments but not a sufficiency of them to romp home a winner in the annual and more demanding this ever, Broadway sweepstakes.

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***NEW YORK* STAR**

**SEPTEMBER 29, 1948**

# Groucho, Tiny Tim Conspire a Comedy

**By John Lardner**

It looks as though Groucho Marx, beneath the salacious smear of black grease on his kisser, has been pining all these years to do something noble, something different. What was on his mind, you ask? Hamlet? Well, maybe next time. Meanwhile, to judge by what happened Monday night at the Fulton, he has settled for Dickens and written a play in the philosophical mood of *A Christmas Carol*, sprinkled—but tenderly—with gags.

The play is called *Time for Elizabeth*, a title with a hint of whimsy which I will decode in a moment. It was written in partnership with Norman Krasna, a smooth operator in the welterweight division of the playwriting dodge. It employs the easy talents of Otto Kruger, supported by a large and skillful cast. It goes to show that all great clowns, from Pagliacci to Marx, are hard to figure out. Who would have thought that Groucho was Tiny Tim with a mustache?

The situation is further confused by the fact that Mr. Marx and Mr. Krasna, having set out to write a routine, sentimental, timeless, plain-folksy—and presumably surefire—comedy of the old school, with here and there a pleasing jest, wind up with a pretty shabby piece of goods on their hands. It's confusing, I say, but there is an episode right at the beginning of the play which may explain it.

On the stage, as the curtain rises, is an agent of the federal government darkly checking the income tax statement of Mr. Kruger, who happens to be vice-president and general manager of the Snowdrift Washing Machine Co. Some funny passages ensue. The characters in the play, and probably a good part of the audience as well, are keenly aware of the diabolic connotations of income tax inspectors.

* * *

But so, with far better reason than most of us have, are the authors. Once they have gotten the tax scene on paper, I seem to see them pause and stare at each other with a wild surmise, silent beside their portable typewriters.

"Krasna, old man," says Mr. Marx at last (playwrights are very formal in their conversation), "have you considered what will happen if this work of art makes good? We will land right in the middle of a very bad tax bracket."

"Marx, old chap," replies his confederate, "your point is timely and sound. Let us by all means avoid that peril."

With these words—which I offer them free of charge for use in their next play—the boys go to work to insure *Time for Elizabeth* against undue success, artistic or otherwise. I am just guessing, of course, but I think they have done a good, safe job of it.

* *

Early in the course of their treatise, Mr. Kruger, the v-p of Snowdrift, is infected by the example of an aged employe and decides it is time to leave the hurly-burly of business life and retire—*Time for Elizabeth* is the way the old man coyly puts it, since his taste in nepenthe runs to towns on Route 1 in New Jersey. So Mr. Kruger quits his job—not forgetting to tell off the boss, with ritual No. 716 B ("the worm turns"), as he does so. Then he and his wife repair to a Dixie counterpart of Elizabeth, N. J., somewhere in Florida, to loaf and fester and exchange homely jokes, and everything happens as you would expect it to.

I was not fast enough with my shorthand to transcribe the speech in which Mr. Kruger's boss urges him back to the fold at the final curtain, but since it also occurs on the next to last page of *A Christmas Carol*, I need only quote:

"'A merry Christmas, Bob!' said Scrooge . . . as he clapped him on the back. 'A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you for many a year! I'll raise your salary, and endeavor to assist your struggling family, and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon, over a Christmas bowl of smoking bishop, Bob!"

You can get a bowl of bishop right across the street from the Fulton Theater, if so minded.

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**DAILY NEWS**

**SEPTEMBER 28, 1948**

# 'Time for Elizabeth' an Ordinary Little Family-Entrance Comedy

**By JOHN CHAPMAN**

One of the first times I saw Groucho Marx he was slinking around the stage and telling somebody a story about an adventure in love from which he had had to flee. He had fled right out the glass window, he said. To prove it he offered, "I'd show you the scars only I know you don't smoke." This killed me.

Well, Mr. Marx has turned playwright in collaboration with another funny fellow, Norman Krasna, and their joint effort came to the Fulton Theatre last evening under the title of "Time for Elizabeth." The play didn't kill me, and I was so surprised about surviving that either of the authors could have knocked me over with a Kiwanis button.

Here were two funnymen who had turned out a family-trade comedy which could have been done better by the late Frank Craven 25 years ago. It's about an executive who elects to retire to Florida and deservedly suffers the kind of life one has to live in Florida on a retirement income. He has a devoted wife and in the end he gets a bigger and better job in good old New York. Strictly magazine-fiction stuff, and I'd like to show Groucho my scars but I am beginning to fear that he has forgotten how to smoke.

**Magazine Fiction.**

To brief you on the plot: Otto Kruger gets mad at his boss and quits a very good job. He retires to Florida with his wife, Katherine Alexander. Any time Mr. Kruger gets tired of Miss Alexander I should like to retire to Florida with her myself, if my wife will come along to protect me from a really charming actress.

To go on, after this dalliance with Miss Alexander: Mr. Kruger gets tired of retiring in Florida and goes back to work in New York at his old job at more pay. A pip of a plot, without doubt, but somehow I expected more of Marx and Krasna.

The players are pleasant enough, though many of them are not necessary. The aforementioned Miss Alexander, as the loving wife of a gent old enough to retire, has good comic spirit, and so, too, does Mr. Kruger, who takes great care about what he does on a stage and who should find himself a really good play some time.

"Time for Elizabeth" has nothing to do with a dame named Elizabeth. Mr. Kruger loves Miss Alexander very much, as he damn well should. Elizabeth is the name of a town in New Jersey where some other employe of Mr. Kruger's company has gone to retire. When this man retires he says, "It's time for Elizabeth." Now it is time for me to go home to bed, and after you read this it will be time for you to go to work.

That's fine. Go to work. Don't retire to Florida, or you may have to play shuffleboard with Groucho Marx and Norman Krasna.

Journal-American

SEPTEMBER 28, 1948

# An Aimless Comedy Neither Good Nor Bad

By ROBERT GARLAND

Can it be true that Broadway producers are, at heart, self-sacrificing fellows? For who but they would set their first curtain-raising half an hour ahead so that the newspapermen, the early morning ones especially, will have ample time in which to dispraise their new productions.

Last night, Russell Lewis and Howard Young opened their "Time For Elizabeth" at approximately 8:15 p. m. Under ordinary circumstances, the opening hour would have been, say, 8:45. Now, I want to know what they will get this morning for their nocturnal thoughtfulness.

**They will get, I fancy, notices in which their Norman Krasna-Groucho Marx collaboration is either damned with faint praise or the other way around. With time to think it over, I am sorry to report that "faint praise" is the best a conscientious newspaperman can, with honor, bestow.**

For the latest importation from the West Coast is no more than an amiable little effort which even an early morning newspaperman can brush off politely in a quarter of an hour.

* * *

## Roves Aimlessly

This "Time For Elizabeth" is the last thing you would expect Mr. Krasna and Mr. Marx to do. As it wanders aimlessly from New York to Florida, filling with homey little touches, three short acts and five shorter scenes, you sit back and ask yourself if—

**Come to think of it, the amiable little effort could have been written by a couple of other fellows. So amiably does it amble from scene to scene that you have leisure in which to persuade yourself that the hard-boiled funny men had no part in its soft-boiled composition.**

How could they, of all people, be concerned with Ed Davis giving up his Manhattan job as vice-president and general manager of the Snowdrift Washing Machine Co. and traipsing off to Florida, taking his wife and, later on, his daughter and his son-in-law with him?

Along with Ed Davis' retreat to Florida, the Norman Krasna-Groucho Marx retreat to simple playwriting is not what, even with that extra half hour, an early morning newspaperman could call successful.

* * *

## Neither Right

**Or an early evening newspaperman, either. If there is nothing very wrong about "Time For Elizabeth," there is nothing very right about it, either. Years ago, when productions costs and theatre seats were cheaper, John Golden produced such amiable little efforts by the baker's dozen.**

Now, at the Fulton, Russell Lewis and Howard Young have produced the Norman Krasna-Groucho Marx amiable little effort with taste in the George Jenkins sets and costumes, with tact in the selection of the actors and the actresses. Everyone, from star to walk-on, underplays discreetly.

Even the washing machine is discreet with under-playing. And the curtain goes up and the scenes go on. And the curtain goes down and the scenes go off. And nothing happens until the happy ending arrives on its private yacht, with Manhattan just around the corner of Cape Foulweather . . .

**Thankful as I am to the Messrs. Lewis and Young for the extra half-hour their unselfish early curtain provided, I need no part of it to report that "Time For Elizabeth" is no time, good, bad or indifferent, for me.**

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New York Herald Tribune

SEPTEMBER 28, 1948

By HOWARD BARNES

*Sub-Standard*

NORMAN KRASNA and Groucho Marx have pooled their talents in a wise-cracking comedy at the Fulton Theater. "Time for Elizabeth" is a stencilled and occasionally jocular consideration of the problems of retirement. With Otto Kruger pointing up the action at every opportunity in the starring role, the show has moments of merriment. They are too few to brighten three acts of contrived play-writing. The authors have taken an idea for a sketch and elaborated it into an ungainly stage exhibit. For all of the handsome Russell Lewis-Howard Young production and some excellent casting, the work is forever falling apart at the seams.

* * *

The Elizabeth of the title is a town; not a lady. In case you really care, it refers to a chance remark made to the general manager of a washing machine company by a veteran employee who is adamant about quitting and loafing his last years away in New Jersey. The notion inspires the executive to follow suit and rusticate in Florida with a wife whom he has scarcely known for twenty-five years. Since there is no question from the outset that the scheme will go on the rocks, "Time For Elizabeth" is principally concerned with gags and odd bits of business, even to having the executive's wife plunge around the stage with a vacuum cleaner.

Kruger does a valiant job in realizing pseudo-satirical accents of the script. He is wonderfully harassed as the wheelhorse of the washing-machine concern. He is equally engaging as a New Yorker thrust into the vagaries of Florida existence and losing his shirt before a year is up. Katherine Alexander supports him ably as the woman who never wanted to leave Manhattan in the first place and the star's daughter, Ottilie, has a pleasant bit as the stage daughter.

* * *

There are other sharply defined characterizations in "Time For Elizabeth." Russell Hicks is exceedingly convincing as the big shot who pulls a rambling plot into some sort of resolution in the climax. Harlan Briggs is as good as ever in the role of the Florida realtor, who takes a retired couple under his wing, and Leonard Mudie and Sheila Bromley have effective interludes. The acting is far better than the material in "Time For Elizabeth." Occasional laughter does not keep the latest arrival in town from being anemic.

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The Sun

SEPTEMBER 28, 1948

By WARD MOREHOUSE

*No Play at Fulton.*

The playwriting combination of Norman Krasna and Groucho Marx isn't likely to be one of the theater's enduring partnerships. Their comedy, "Time for Elizabeth," submitted last evening at the Fulton, is a forlorn little play, a piece that begins weakly and gets steadily worse as it goes along.

"Time for Elizabeth" presents the case of one Ed Davis, the hard-working vice-president and general manager of the Snowdrift Washing Machine Company, who decides to retire after working for twenty-eight years. He goes to Florida, plays a bit of golf, tries a little bridge, and finds that middle-aged leisure isn't profitable and not much fun.

In such plays as "Dear Ruth" and "John Loves Mary" Norman Krasna revealed a facility for constructing workmanlike comedy, but in "Time for Elizabeth" he misses the trick completely and Groucho Marx seems to have done little to help the cause. Krasna did the staging and George Jenkins designed the settings, one of which is fairly hideous.

Otto Kruger, a capable actor through many plays and many seasons, gives a half-hearted performance in the leading role. Katherine Alexander, who has been impressive in several Broadway plays, returns in a hopeless role. There's an actor named John Arthur in a minor part—the same Arthur who was once the house boy of the steamship line owner in Eugene Walter's famous "Paid in Full," which belonged to the New York stage of long, long ago. That was a better play than "Time for Elizabeth."

The new comedy was brought to town from California by Russell Lewis and Howard Young. The drama did not advance last night at the Fulton.